

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Office of Ocean Exploration (OE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration (OE) Announcement of Opportunity, Fiscal Year 2007.

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Topics: Ocean Exploration, Marine Archaeology, Ocean Exploration Education
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s): 11.460 - Special Oceanic and Atmospheric Projects

Dates: Pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on July 10, 2006. Full proposal submissions must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on September 8, 2006. Applications received after the above deadlines will not be considered.

Application Submission: Essential guidance is contained in the full announcement text, for the format, content, length and review criteria of pre-proposals and full proposals.

Pre-Proposals can be submitted either by e-mail (send to OEOffice@noaa.gov) or by hard-copy (send three signed hard-copies to the address below).

ATTN: PROPOSAL MANAGER, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, SSMC3, 10th Floor, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Funding Opportunity Description: OE is seeking pre-proposals and full proposals to support its mission, consistent with NOAA's Strategic Plan (<http://www.nrc.noaa.gov>), to search, investigate, and document poorly-known and unknown areas of the ocean and Great Lakes through interdisciplinary exploration, and to advance and disseminate knowledge of the ocean environment and its physical, chemical, biological, and marine archaeological resources. Competitive OE proposals will be bold, innovative and interdisciplinary in their approach and objectives and will fall within one (or more) of three categories: Ocean Exploration, Marine Archaeology, and Ocean Exploration Education. NOAA OE anticipates a total of approximately \$2,100,000 including costs for ship and submersible assets will be available through this announcement, partitioned as follows: Ocean Exploration \$1,400,000; Archaeology \$400,000 and Ocean Exploration Education \$300,000. Applicants are encouraged to visit the Ocean Explorer Web site (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) to familiarize themselves with past and present OE-funded activities. Background on how to apply and the required proposal cover sheets are accessible through the OE Office Web site at <http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program & Notice Objective

Ocean exploration was defined by the 2000 President's panel as "discovery through disciplined diverse observations and the recording of the finding." NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program (OE) seeks to catalyze ocean discovery and understanding at our ocean and Great Lakes frontiers through bold and innovative explorations. These explorations should revolutionize our knowledge baselines by exploring, characterizing and mapping, at new and/or higher scales, the ocean's living and nonliving resources and its physical, chemical, biological, and archaeological characteristics. Data and observations resulting from OE expeditions will result in new discoveries, new insight, new knowledge and new frontiers and will likely lead to the revision of existing paradigms or the formulation of new paradigms in the oceans poorly known and unknown regions.

The purpose of this announcement is to invite the submission of pre-proposals and full proposals that address three specific thematic priorities.

B. Program Priorities & Guidance

The following thematic priorities are consistent with the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration (<http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/websites/retiredsites/oceanpanel.pdf>); NOAA's 5-Year Research Plan (http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/Docs/NOAA_5-Year_Research_Plan_010605.pdf); in part from eight regional NOAA-hosted ocean exploration workshops (<http://www.explore.noaa.gov/workshops/welcome.html>); a 2003 National Academy Report "Exploration of the Seas: Voyage into the Unknown;" the 2004 Report of the US Commission on Ocean Policy (2004) and the Presidents' Ocean Action Plan.

Ocean Exploration

Interdisciplinary expeditions are a keystone of NOAA's Ocean Exploration Program with scientists from multiple fields jointly exploring poorly known or unknown ocean areas. The characteristics of the habitat, region or discipline should suggest a potential for bold, new discoveries. Scientists are strongly encouraged to collaborate by submitting a single proposal for a multi-disciplinary expedition. Collaborations that include international representation are also encouraged. Specific thematic priorities within Ocean Exploration are:

- Survey ridges, canyons, faults, seamounts and other key features and habitats of economic, hazardous, scientific or cultural importance using multibeam, sidescan sonar, or other seafloor or water column mapping technologies;
- Discover and describe new species and new resources, both living and non-living, including those of economic importance and/or benefit to humanity, e.g., natural products for pharmaceutical or biotechnology application, new hydrate or seep systems or fish stocks;
- Describe poorly-known or discover and describe unknown communities of organisms displaying novel relationships with their environments;
- Describe poorly-known or discover and describe unknown physical or chemical processes, e.g., deep ocean currents, chemical and/or heat plumes from hydrothermal vents or other ocean phenomenon;

- Deploy in-situ instrumentation at poorly-known or unknown locations to explore in the time domain; and
- Develop and/or utilize new tools, probes, sensors, and systems that will increase the pace and efficiency at which living and non-living resources are discovered, and uncover processes with far-ranging implications for the study of the earth as a whole.

Ocean Exploration Background/Requirements: Vehicles required to conduct ocean explorations should be explicitly identified, including the use of Human Occupied Vehicles, Remotely Occupied Vehicles and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles. Habitat and key feature surveying includes low resolution (>10m) surveys of areas that have never been surveyed, and/or high resolution (<10m) surveys of new areas or areas that have been surveyed only at low resolution.

Total funding for the Ocean Exploration category, including ship time in FY07, is estimated at \$1,400,000. Depending on the quality and quantity of proposals received, a minimum of four projects are expected to be funded, resulting in an average award level of approximately \$350,000.

Marine Archaeology

Discovery, investigation and inventory of shipwrecks, aircraft and submerged landscape projects within U.S. state and Federal waters are the primary focus areas of the program. Investigation of significant maritime heritage projects holding a unique place in American or human history, wherever they may be found will be considered. Proposals will focus on the early phases of field archaeology: searching, locating, evaluating or inventorying sites. This Announcement is not intended to support later phases of archaeological research, such as intensive site excavations, major conservation projects, and multi-year expeditions. All applicants must convincingly describe:

- The archaeological significance of their site(s), and their importance to human history;
- How their research design fits within the realm of exploration;
- Why their research methodologies are the most innovative and economical use of marine technology available today.
- Though OE does not directly manage submerged historical or cultural resources, the program supports cultural resource management programs within NOAA, Federal, state and foreign government agencies. Proposals are encouraged to include appropriate resources management partners, when possible, to demonstrate that the long-term protection of the resources is being considered.
- Using advanced technology, testing scientific methods new to the field of marine archaeology, and incorporating multidisciplinary approaches to data acquisition and decimation are all strongly encouraged. Vehicles required to conduct ocean explorations should be explicitly identified, including the use of Human Occupied Vehicles, Remotely Occupied Vehicles and Autonomous Underwater Vehicles.

Total funding for the Marine Archaeology category in FY07 is estimated at \$400,000. Depending on the quality and quantity of proposals received, a minimum of five projects are expected to be funded. Each proposal's funding request should not exceed \$100,000.

Ocean Exploration Education

In response to the 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration Report and the NOAA Strategic Plan, the NOAA OE Office produced a curriculum titled *Learning Ocean Science through Ocean Exploration*. Developed for use in professional development for teachers of Grades 6-12, the OE curriculum includes lessons developed from NOAA expeditions of discovery. Curriculum themes progress from physical science through earth science to biological and environmental science. By combining the Ocean Explorer Web site (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) and the OE companion CD into the curriculum, teachers and students have a direct connection to the scientists whose work they are modeling in the classroom and to other new discoveries made on OE expeditions. The curriculum is available online at:

(<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/edu/curriculum/welcome.html>). NOAA is seeking to extend the use of these OE education materials located on the Web site and in the National Science Education Standards-based curriculum in school districts and other learning centers throughout the country. Education submissions should consider at least one of the following areas to integrate effectively the OE curriculum and companion CD/Web site into teaching and learning:

- District-wide professional development for teachers in the use of the curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web;
- School-wide team-based development for teachers in the use of the OE curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web site;
- Integration of institutions of higher learning with teachers of Grades 6-12 in use of the curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web site;
- Integration of the curriculum and NOAA Ocean Explorer Companion CD/Web site into after-school/summer programs; and
- Other novel projects that extend the use of the curriculum and companion CD/Web site at the local, state and/or regional level.

Formative and summative evaluation and demographic data collection are required as part of the project. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the 2004 NOAA Education Plan, found at: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/>, and the NOAA Ocean Explorer Web site at: <http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>.

Total funding for the Ocean Exploration Education category is estimated at \$300,000. Depending on the quality and quantity of proposals received, a minimum of six projects are expected to be funded, resulting in an average award level of approximately \$50,000.

C. Ship and Submersible Assets

OE has not pre-paid or reserved any blocks of ship-time for upcoming expeditions. If your proposed work requires funding for ship time or submersible assets, these costs should be included in your proposed budget. If you have already acquired ship time, please be sure to note it in your proposal.

D. Geographic Areas of Particular Interest

The Ocean Exploration Program is global in scope and invites proposals to investigate poorly known and unknown areas of the world's oceans.

In support of activities associated with the Joint Russian-American Long-term Census of the Arctic (RUSALCA) Research Program in the Bering and Chukchi Seas, OE anticipates jointly supporting investigations aboard a Russian icebreaker in 2008. This cruise will be co-sponsored by NOAA's Arctic Research Office (ARO), OE and possibly other sponsors. To facilitate long-

term planning, OE is now accepting proposals for the RUSALCA expedition in 2008, as part of this FY07 Announcement. More information on RUSALCA can be found at:

<http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/aro/> .

E. Program Authority: 33 U.S.C. 883d

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

In anticipation of the FY07 President's Budget, OE expects to support approximately 15 awards through this solicitation, a minimum of four in Ocean Exploration, five in Archaeology and six in Education. The OE Director may hold-over select proposals submitted for FY07 funding for FY08 funding consideration.

The amount of funding available through this announcement is subject to the final FY07 appropriation for Ocean Exploration. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to fund any specific project or to obligate all or any part of available funds. There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate or continue research activities where funding has been recommended by OE. The exact amount of funds that OE may recommend be granted will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Future opportunities for submitting proposals may be available and will depend on OE funding levels.

B. Project/Award Period

Although proposals for one to three-year projects will be accepted for program review, the current principal focus of the OE program is on one-year projects. Applications must include a scope of work and a budget for the entire award period. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be approximately 120-150 days after the NOAA funding appropriation. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in proposing research activities.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding from non-Federal applicants will be funded through a grant or cooperative agreement under the terms of this notice. Proposals selected for funding from NOAA scientists will be funded through an intra-agency transfer. Proposals selected for funding from a non-NOAA Federal agency will be funded through an inter-agency transfer. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the Federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as specifying direction or redirection of the scope of work due to inter-relationships with other projects or stipulating that the recipient must meet or adhere to specific procedural requirements before subsequent stages of a project may continue.

D. Permits and Approvals

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary International, Federal, State and Local Government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse environmental impact. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine the environmental impact of a proposal under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are from institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, State, Local and Indian tribal governments. Applications from Federal agencies are also eligible. *Please Note:* Before non-NOAA Federal applicants may be funded, they must

demonstrate they have legal authority to receive funds from another Federal agency in excess of their appropriation. Because this announcement is not proposing to procure goods or services from applicants, the Economy Act (31 USC 1535) is not an appropriate legal basis.

B. Cost Sharing

Cost-sharing is not required.

C. Funding Requirements

None.

D. Potential Partners

As evidenced by the success of funded research under the auspices of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), the Ocean Exploration Program encourages partnerships between academia, government and industry. While not a requirement, proposals demonstrating partnerships with at least two of the above sectors are encouraged. Partnership with industry is strongly encouraged. OE also encourages investigators to seek complementary funding for their proposed projects through linked proposals to other agencies, both internal and external to NOAA.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address To Request Application Packages

There is no application required for a pre-proposal, however there is a required cover sheet which may be obtained through the OE Office web site at:

<http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>. For applicants without internet access, hard copies of the cover sheet can be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444 ext. 130.

Application forms for full proposals are available through Grants.gov APPLY. In addition, a proposal cover sheet (available at the OE Office web site as stated above) which is not in Grants.gov APPLY, must be submitted. For applicants without internet access, hard copies of the cover sheet and the application package can be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444 ext. 130 as well.

Full proposal application packages for non-Federal applicants are available at <http://www.grants.gov/>. Supplemental information regarding the standard NOAA grants documentation can be obtained at: <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Egrants/appkit.html>.

B. Content and Form of Application

1. Pre-proposal Contents

Two-page pre-proposals are required for all submissions and should be compelling, concise and clear. They should briefly motivate and summarize your proposed bold, innovative ideas and potential new discoveries, new knowledge and new insight. They should also identify project priorities, and objectives, describe how the proposed project relates to OE's mission and themes (as described in Section 1. A & B above), identify all major collaborators, and include a budget summarizing the major categories. In a few short sentences each, identify 1) the poorly known or unknown area of proposed operations (i.e., latitude, longitude, and depth) and the characteristics of the habitat, region or discipline which suggest a potential for bold, new discoveries or far ranging implications for our understanding of the earth system; 2) required platforms or other critical assets; 3) any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project; 4) time or operational

constraints, especially with regard to field operations; 5) anticipated outputs (e.g. potential discoveries, knowledge and impact, published papers, reports, meetings, and/or education and outreach material) and 6) results from past Ocean Exploration funding (if appropriate).

All pre-proposal submissions must: 1) include the 2-page OE coversheet; 2) not exceed two single-sided typewritten pages and; 3) be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. The Principal Investigator's last name must be typed in the bottom right-hand corner of each page. See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. for submission procedures and addresses.

2. Full Proposal Contents

Full proposals must include the following, in the order listed. Excluding the coversheet, please number each page and label it with the Principal Investigator's last name in the bottom right-hand corner. As appropriate, all full proposal text should be written on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, in at least 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins. See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. for submission procedures and addresses.

No appendices are permitted.

a. Completed 2-page Proposal Coversheet;

b. Maximum Half-page Executive Summary: Describe the essential elements of the project being proposed. Include: 1) Title, 2) List of names, contact details and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project, 3) Funding request for each year of the project as well as total funding requested, and 4) A concise statement of the objectives and benefits of the project, including new discoveries and knowledge, the scientific methodology to be used, and the rationale for the work proposed;

c. Project Description: The project description is not to exceed 15 pages, including all text and any tables and visual materials (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, photographs). The 15-page limit does not include the Coversheet, Executive Summary, Budget and Budget Justification, Literature Citation, Current and Pending Support, Curriculum Vitae, Letters of Commitment, and required forms.

Successful proposals will motivate bold, innovative ideas and explorations and reference how they fulfill OE's mission and themes (as described in Section I. A & B):

i) Describe the rationale, methodology, and justification for the proposed explorations. Aspects to consider include:

- What is the problem or issue being addressed?
- Describe how the proposed project relates with OE's mission and themes (as described in Section I. A & B)
- What are the goals, objectives, and anticipated approach of the proposed project? How/why are they bold and/or innovative?
- What is its scientific, technical, historical, cultural or socioeconomic importance? Will it lead to new discoveries, new insight, new knowledge or new frontiers? Will it lead to the revision of existing paradigms or the formulation of new paradigms?
- What are the bold, new discoveries you propose/hope to make? What are the probabilities for success?
- What unique capabilities do the partners possess that will benefit the project?

Applicants should also identify: ii) the poorly known or unknown area of proposed operations (i.e., latitude, longitude, and depth) and the characteristics of the habitat, region or discipline which suggest a potential for bold, new discoveries or far ranging implications for our understanding of the earth system, iii) the required platforms or other critical assets, iv) any auxiliary funding sources for the proposed project, v) responsibilities of each major participant, and, vi) time or operational constraints, especially with regard to field operations. Proposals should also include a description and justification of data funding needs and explain how data will be made accessible or available to the public.

d. Summary of Results from Past Ocean Exploration Support (if applicable). Concise summary of results and achievements, including publications from past Ocean Exploration funding.

e. Summary of Relevant Current Funding Support: Applicants must provide information on all their current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including potential subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The proposed project and all other projects or activities using Federal assistance or that requires a portion of time of the principal investigator or other senior personnel should be included. The relationship between the proposed project and these other projects should be described, and the number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated.

f. Brief Resumes for Each Investigator: two pages maximum for all Principal and Co-Principal Investigator(s) involved in carrying out the proposal, including recent relevant publication references;

g. Detailed Tabular Budget: Separate budgets within the single proposal must be provided if more than one funding action is anticipated (e.g., if funds are to be allocated to more than one institution or agency through subcontracts).

h. Budget Narrative: (including justification for non-standard items as well as cost share/in-kind contribution); detailed description of cost justifications.

i. Forms: Applicants must submit a complete NOAA grant application package provided from Grants.gov.

See Section IV.C for submission due dates and IV.F. for submission procedures and addresses.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-proposals are required for all categories and must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on July 10, 2006. Before 5:00 pm (EDT), an auto-reply message will notify applicant that their email with pre-proposal material was received. After 5:00pm (EDT), an auto-reply message will notify applicant that their email with pre-proposal material submission is late. Pre-proposals are a prerequisite for submission of a full proposal. Applicants will receive an email encouraging or discouraging a full proposal submission by July 25, 2006. If you have not received a reply by July 25th, contact OE (oeoffice@noaa.gov) as soon as possible.

There is no application required for a pre-proposal, however there is a required cover sheet which may be obtained through the OE Office web site at:

<http://www.explore.noaa.gov/opportunity/welcome.html>. For applicants without internet access, hard copies of the cover sheet can be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444.

Full proposals must be received by 5:00 pm (EDT) on September 8, 2006.

For applications submitted through www.Grants.gov, a date and time receipt indication is included and will be the basis of determining timeliness. Hard copy proposals will be date and

time stamped when they are received in the Program Office. For applicants without internet access or federal applicants, hard copies of the cover sheet and the application package can be obtained via mail at NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC 3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or requested by phone at (301) 713-9444 as well.

Pre-proposals and Full-Proposals submitted after their respective cutoff date and time will not be considered.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to find out about and comply with the State's process under EO 12372. The names and addresses of the SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's Web site:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

F. Procedures and Addresses for Application Submission

Pre-proposal submissions can be either by e-mail (send to OEOffice@noaa.gov) or by hard-copy (send three copies to the mailing address below). If by e-mail, please put your last name in the subject heading along with the words OE Pre-proposal, e.g., "Smith OE Pre-proposal."

Adobe PDF format is preferred. No facsimile pre-proposals will be accepted.

Full proposal submissions for non-Federal applicants must be submitted through www.grants.gov. Federal applicants must submit hard-copies to the address below. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number is 11.460 - Special Oceanic and Atmospheric Projects

An exception will be made for those non-Federal applicants with limited internet access, who may submit hard-copy to the address below. No e-mail proposal submissions will be accepted.

Instructions and Mailing Address for Hard-Copy Submissions: Pre-proposals or Full Proposals. Hard copy applications should be binder-clipped together (**not** bound or stapled) and printed on one-side only. Three signed, hard copy originals are required (use blue/black ink). Since reviewers will require access to an electronic copy, applicants submitting hard copies are highly-encouraged to also submit a digital version in one Adobe PDF file on CD-ROM.

MAILING ADDRESS: ATTN: Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, SSMC III, 10th Floor, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

V. Application Review Information

A. Pre-Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The OE Director in consultation with the program staff will make the decision to encourage or discourage full proposal submissions based on one or more of the following factors: (1)

Applicability of the project objectives to OE mission and thematic priorities (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance); (2) Extent to which the pre-proposal focuses on a geographical area that is unknown or poorly known; (3) Reasonableness of project costs relative to available program funds; (4) Logistical feasibility (e.g., ship availability), given OE resource availability; (5) Consistency with the format of this announcement. The final decision to submit a full proposal is up to the applicant.

B. Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Full proposals will be evaluated and rated individually by three or more independent peer reviewers. The following criteria will be used to review proposals using the corresponding weight value:

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals (40%): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and relevance to appropriate NOAA, international, Federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the OE review process this includes the degree to which the proposal addresses and supports OE's mission, objectives, themes and priorities (see Section I.A. Program & Notice Objectives and Section I.B. Program Priorities & Guidance);
2. Scientific and Technical Merit (40% for Ocean Exploration and Marine Archaeology; 0% for Education): This criterion assesses whether there are clear project goals and objectives; whether the approach is technically sound, and/or innovative, and whether the methods are appropriate. For the OE review process, this will evaluate the scientific, and/or technical merit of the effort, including whether it a) will work in a region or habitat with a high probability for bold, new discoveries, new knowledge or identification of new frontiers, b) whether the anticipated results (as appropriate, scientific, technical, historical, cultural, societal or economic) will have high impact; c) lead to the revision of existing paradigms or the formulation of new paradigms, or d) introduce new techniques to increase the pace or efficiency of exploration of new processes, natural products or resources for societal or economic benefit.
3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, technical experience, capabilities, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the OE review process this includes the qualifications of the applicant, the strength, diversity and depth of any partnership to accomplish the work proposed as well as accomplishments from past OE funding, if applicable.
4. Project Costs (10%): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the OE review process this includes the reasonableness of project costs, relative to the scope of work proposed and the available funds.
5. Outreach and Education (40% for Education; 0% for Ocean Exploration and Marine Archaeology): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nations natural resources.

C. Review and Selection Process

Once a full proposal is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

If proposals are determined to be in compliance and complete, peer reviewers shall rate the individual proposals using the evaluation criteria and percentage weights provided above. Both Federal and non-Federal experts in the field may be used in the peer-review process. Reviewers will not be asked to reach consensus on individual proposals. Based on the individual scores, the OE Senior Scientist, in consultation with appropriate OE staff, will make funding recommendations to the OE Director. In making the final selections, the OE Director will award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors.

The review ratings based on criteria in Section V.B will provide a rank order to the Selecting Official (OE Director) for final funding recommendations to NOAA Grants Management. The OE

Senior Scientist may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official applying selection factors described in V.D (below) as identified by NOAA Grants Management. The Selecting Official shall recommend in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the factors in V.D.

D. Selection Factors

The selection factors identified by NOAA Grants Management include the following:

1. Availability of funding.
2. Balance/distribution of funds:
 - a. Geographically (This includes ship availability)
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other Federal agencies.
4. Program priorities and policy factors (as in Section I.B).
5. Applicants' prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups.
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

E. Anticipated Dates of Award Announcement

OE will notify all applicants (Federal and non-Federal) of the results of a peer review and the final recommendation to award or decline funding of a proposal in writing, by postal mail or email approximately 120 days after receipt of a full proposal. Successful applicants will receive notification from the NOAA Grants Management Division that the application has been funded. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows OE funding of the project to begin. Notifications will be issued through electronic mail to the proposal's Authorizing Official.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the collaboration duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement in the activities of each partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and OE. Project activities should not be initiated in the expectation of grant funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Department of Commerce Requirements. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) is applicable to this solicitation.

Limitation of Liability. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal or project preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities identified prior to final award of a grant. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPAAs required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA Federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA Web site:

<http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216--6--TOC.pdf>, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts that may result from their proposed projects. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date of the project. Progress reports are due either electronically or by mail directly to the NOAA Ocean Exploration office and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports should detail collaborative activities that have occurred during the reporting period that correspond with the goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information including financial reports.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

For further information contact the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration at 301-713-9444 x130 or submit inquiries via email to the Frequently Asked Questions address: oar.oe.FAQ@noaa.gov.

Email inquiries should include the Principal Investigator's name in the subject heading. Inquiries can be mailed to ATTN: Proposal Manager, NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

VIII. Other Information

By receiving funding from OE, all applicants agree to the following expectations for sample collection, education and outreach, data management and Web site requirements. To help meet these requirements, one or more NOAA staff may become members of the at-sea science party serving roles as Data Managers or Web Coordinators.

A. Sample Collection

In certain cases, the OE Program may initiate the collection of living/non-living samples during the research on a NOAA or NOAA-chartered vessel. This may occur when an expedition 1) does not plan to collect living and/or nonliving samples or collects the samples for purposes other than

for pharmaceutical/biotechnology or mineral/new energy discovery uses, or 2) will only conduct a limited analysis of a collected specimen. The OE Program will work with the expedition team to ensure the sampling does not significantly interfere with or reduce the overall objectives of the expedition. In no case, will cultural material be removed or collected as a result of this sampling.

B. Education & Outreach

All funded applicants and collaborators shall cooperate with OE in facilitating education and outreach activities associated with scientific proposals. This may include participation in the development of lessons, professional development for teachers, accommodation of a teacher/educator-at-sea, participation in a media event or press conference to describe the expedition and its findings, at-sea media participation, and support for public/student tours of the research vessel and interaction with scientists in shipboard labs. Science-based exploration proposals need not craft a specific education and outreach component, although creativity is encouraged on behalf of the applicant. The OE program will assess and provide an appropriate education and/or outreach activity in collaboration with the applicant.

NOAA's Ocean Explorer Website (<http://www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) is the principal vehicle for chronicling and documenting all missions supported by NOAA and OE. Mission participants are required to provide information pre-, during, and post-cruise for this site such as cruise tracks; preliminary bathymetry; characterization of data collected; photographic or other images from the mission; and be available to participate in interviews, essays, or written materials. A minimum of 15 digital, still images and 10 short video clips (one minute or less each) will be identified during the expedition by the PI, as appropriate, to illustrate the expedition on NOAA an/or other Web coverage, and for distribution to media. These materials will be appropriately credited and will, by agreement, be copyright free. OE will provide an OE Web Coordinator to work with the applicant and science party to determine the content of the Web offering, and to develop and implement a Web production plan.

C. Data Management

The 2000 President's Panel on Ocean Exploration called for a Federal program that promotes data management and dissemination so that discoveries can result in a maximum and immediate benefit. To implement this recommendation each applicant shall meet the following data management requirements:

Recipients will provide metadata, e.g., number and type of data, and description of the data collected, in a manner defined by NOAA, within 30 days of completion of the expedition. To aid in the Census of Marine Life (CoML, <http://www.coml.org>) goal of determining the distribution, abundance and diversity of marine life, projects are encouraged to maintain their biological species information on-line and linked (either directly or via a Federal data center) to the CoML database, the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) (<http://www.iobis.org>). A statement to this effect or your proposed solution for maintaining on-line availability of biological information, should be included in the proposal. Biological samples should be registered with the Census of Marine Life's OBIS database (<http://www.iobis.org>) or a Federal database that is linked to OBIS. A collection plan, including repository for the samples, should also be included. Other data or data products may also be requested at the discretion of the OE Director for administrative, scientific, or educational use. All such requested products will be developed in full collaboration with the applicant, and any data considered sensitive will be handled appropriately. Recipients will be responsible for archiving all acquired data sets and associated products in the appropriate NOAA archive (i.e., National Oceanographic Data Center, National Geophysical Data Center, National Coastal Data Development Center, National Climate Data Center, and the

NOAA Central Library) as soon as practical and, in no case, later than two years following the completion of the expedition. Any specific archaeological site information that is considered sensitive material under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) will not be required.

For a subset of funded expeditions, OE will facilitate data collection, management and archival by providing the services of an OE Data Manager. The OE Data Manager will be responsible for documenting all expedition activities (e.g., science, education and outreach, transits, shuttles) in the OE Expedition Information System (EIS). The metadata records contained in the EIS will be provided to the Science Team for inclusion in required reports, and will be distributed to the appropriate NOAA archive.